Artefacts

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Artefacts

by StratsWrote, whiskeyandspite

Summary

They'd met young, relatively speaking. Yearlings, starving and eager; Will had been abandoned by his sire, Hannibal had left his own in search of someone more interesting. They'd found each other.

The first time they had stayed together for fifty years, before Will had pushed him away, determined to not rely on anyone, even in immortality.

Hannibal had found him next in Germania, on a battlefield, some eighty years thence.

Will and Hannibal are vampires, centuries old. Sometimes they need a break from the other, but their love hasn't waned in all that time.

Notes

A wonderful request from a wonderful friend - we really enjoyed the aspect of nostalgia for this piece rather than just killing, but there is that certainly!

See the end of the work for more notes

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: [中译] Artefacts 文物 by HayKer

“Unbelievable,” Will muttered, scrolling down further on his phone and enlarging the picture provided. It was the stereotypical photo of an old letter behind glass, lit as only a museum could light something. He zoomed in further, but the words were pixelated and impossible to read.

He didn’t need to read them.

He’d *written them.*

“Fuck’s sake.” Will shoved his glasses up his nose and copied the link into a text message, firing off a few other choice words after it, and waited. His phone buzzed not a moment later and he picked up without needing to check who was calling.

“This wasn’t the missive you sent me from the Napoleonic wars, was it?”

“Yes,” Will cursed. “It’s *that missive* . They had parts of it up on ‘dear boy’ for years and now they found the full thing.”

“Where?”

“Where do you think,” Will groaned. “I forgot to pay for one of my goddamn storage boxes and someone bought it at auction.”

Hannibal’s laugh was warm and pleased through the line. It warmed Will as much as it annoyed him.

“This is why I have a carefully curated list of mine,” he pointed out.

“It’s been half a millenia,” Will replied, “I can’t keep track of *all* of them. Switch to email, like a normal person.”

“And allow my penmanship to whither and die?” Will heard the swish of wine in a glass, crystal clear through the phone line as Hannibal took a sip. Much better than the early days of the telephone, when Hannibal had often wanted to hear Will’s voice despite Will’s hatred for the tinny, distant sound.

“I’m going to text you entirely in chat speak,” Will grumbled.

“It’s 2020, Will. You have an iPhone.”

“AOL Instant Messenger,” Will said, louder, “In cerulean blue font.”

“Are you so ashamed to have your love for me known by the world?”

Will quieted, letting his eyes drift over the room, unseeing.

Instead, he saw his cramped quarters during the wars, the soldiers he’d brought home to feast on. He remembered that longing, missing Hannibal as his travels took him elsewhere.

They were seperated often, in their time, each enjoying their space, but that space always held a perfectly-shaped gap where the other should have been.

“You know that’s not it,” Will said softly.

“I know,” Hannibal assured him. “Yet, it embarrasses you.”

“Those words were meant for *you* ,” Will said, “and you alone. They were never meant to belong to anyone else. We should have kept our estate in the south.”

“You would not have been able to bear standing on the wrong side of the battlefield, and war was coming fast,” Hannibal reminded him.

Only a few decades after the last war. And then they’d been too busy to move back in together, and then had come The Great War, and then World War Two. Then the media had come about, and it had been impractical to attempt another cohabitation while men who loved like they did where being pulled from clubs and parks and any place they could find, and shut behind bars.

After that, they’d just been too *busy* .

As if he could sense Will’s pain, Hannibal hummed, a soft, reassuring sound. “It’s been a long time since I’ve read my letters,” he said. “Perhaps I should go and visit this one in person.”

Will could feel himself smile. “It’s in the Paris museum.”

“I know.”

“You’re not in Paris.”

“Travel is much quicker now, Will, I’m not sure if you’re aware.”

Will laughed, unable to keep the sound of pleasure behind his hand. They’d both weathered the horror that was travel by ship, trapped together in a sealed coffin, jostled on the waves, forcing themselves to sleep, to relax, to let time flow over them like a breeze. When the first planes took off from the ground, carrying people with them, Hannibal had immediately bought a ticket.

Will had waited for the time night flights became more common, and otherwise took the trains.

“You haven’t visited *me* in person,” Will added after a while, to another warm hum through the line.

“You hadn’t invited me.”

“Am I the only one who has to offer an invite?”

“No, but I offered the last one.”

“You’re a pompous ass,” Will told him fondly. “Go on a date with me.”

“I’ll consider.”

Will shook his head and hung up.

The letter looked frayed and fragile, paper yellowed and ink fading in parts. There was a transcript of the contents in French on a little placard, and a translation shown to be available in over fifty languages if one photographed the QR code and signed into the museum server.

Will and Hannibal stood side by side looking at it. The place was quiet, they’d deliberately come just as dusk had set in, and just before the museum closed, allowing themselves plenty of time to enjoy the single thing they had come here to see.

Hannibal from Portugal, Will from America.

“This was the era I started training myself to write with my left hand,” Will pointed out quietly.

“I could always tell when something had truly upset you,” Hannibal murmured back. “You would become too impatient and smear the ink.”

Will’s hand found his. Centuries together, and every touch still carried fire. Will’s nerve endings came alive. Here, with their fingers interlocked, was home.

“There was a lot to be upset about, in those days.”

“You *still* smear the ink,” Hannibal said, his voice fond. “I wonder how smudged the corrections are on your student’s essays?”

Will tilted his head to rest it on Hannibal’s shoulder. They were not overly physically affectionate in public; it was difficult to fight off the centuries they’d spent hiding.

Here, though, Will knew they were safe. And he could not bear to be apart from Hannibal a second longer.

Hannibal turned his face into Will’s hair and brushed his lips against the crown of his head.

“It’s not even one of the *good* letters,” Will grumbled.

“Of course not,” Hannibal said. “Those, I keep together. Carefully preserved.”

“Not all of them,” Will said with a smirk. “I remember a certain passage postmarked from Italy.”

“The comparisons were apt.” Hannibal gave Will’s hand a squeeze, tugging him along. “Your beauty was my inspiration. One day, I’ll show you Florence.”

“It won’t be like you remember it.”

“Nothing ever is. But you’ll appreciate the memories. You always do.”

They had enough memories between them to appreciate.

They'd met young, relatively speaking. Yearlings, starving and eager; Will had been abandoned by his sire, Hannibal had left his own in search of someone more interesting. They’d found each other.

The first time they had stayed together for fifty years, before Will had pushed him away, determined to not rely on anyone, even in immortality.

Hannibal had found him next in Germania, on a battlefield, some eighty years thence.

They walked through the museum now, whispering together, fingers folded close, palm to palm. They hadn’t seen each other in person in a decade. Video calls had been out of the question, as had selfies. Certain aspects of lore were, amusingly enough, accurate: their images could only be captured on analogue film, and guaranteed only through heliographs or Daguerreotypes, not digitally. Attempting a Skype call would have been akin to staring at an image of an empty room for an hour, so they’d stuck to regular calls.

“Where are you staying?” Hannibal asked after a while, an overhead automated message announced in French and English that the museum was closing in five minutes.

“Where we always stay,” Will replied, eyes narrowed in pleasure. “What about you?”

“With you.” Hannibal said, bringing their joined hands to his lips to kiss Will’s knuckles.

They kept houses; Hannibal had been something of nobility before his turning, and with some effort he had managed to inherit the fortune from himself every few decades. Will, on the other hand, lived within his means, invested carefully, and had been utterly relieved by the invention of night schooling. He learned, and he taught, and he accepted the occasional hand from Hannibal, if only because the last time he’d denied it, Hannibal had pestered him for nearly a decade. He was persistent, to a fault.

And they had the houses, their shared spaces together, places they could meet or which they could visit alone to feel each other’s presence. The one in Paris was a townhouse, french doors in the bedroom leading out to a balcony that overlooked the city. Hannibal threw them open to let in fresh air, while Will pulled down the sheets.

“I won’t let you touch me with those open,” Will warned.

Hannibal grinned at him, showing fangs. “So doubtful of my ability to quiet you?”

“You, of course, are completely silent when I touch *you* .”

Hannibal wrapped his arms around Will’s waist, pulling him back against his chest. “Not quite as loud as you, my love. And I’ve been looking forward to pulling those cries from your lips again. It’s been too long.”

It had been. The decade they hadn't physically touched, and a few years before that when they shared space but where they lived didn't allow for such openness as the world did now. They'd moved from that part of the world since, neither interested in returning for another century at least, until another inevitable enlightenment brought about forward thinking.

Will tilted his head and sighed as Hannibal kissed his throat.

Neither had scars; they couldn't carry any, but both remembered where the bite that had turned them had been placed. As Hannibal licked against the centuries'-old ghost of marks over Will's pale skin, he shivered.

For a while, Will had kept a record of every place they'd been intimate. For his own amusement more than anything else. It had actually been one of the first notebooks he'd thought lost, before some amateur archeologist claimed to have discovered it sealed inside the walls of a collapsing building in New Orleans.

A few weeks followed of people trying to understand what the marks in the book meant, what sort of shorthand its author had been using - Will hadn't, he'd merely been writing in Old English - before an inexplicable fire destroyed the rooms it and other such items were kept.

Such a pity.

Will still remembered, of course, without the written record. Immortality came with the cursed gift of eidetic memory and the time to learn to file all the information away in the vast caverns of his mind. He and Hannibal had desecrated so many holy sites in their passion, had frequented places no longer standing, could follow the literal underbelly of cities like Edinburgh without a map because they'd been around when they'd first been opened to house the poor and needy.

As the world advanced, so did their tastes and pleasures.

Now, if they chose to fill catacombs with the echoes of their voices, it was a special occasion; and they weren't due for an anniversary for another twenty-three years.

"I want you to keep me quiet and make me come," Will challenged him, his lips spreading to show his teeth in turn. "And then I want dinner."

Hannibal undressed him with slow, attentive hands. Will returned the favor, the both of them stumbling over each other as they maneuvered towards the bed. There were easier ways to get about, surely but neither of them could bear to be apart from each other for another second.

"Portugal is too fucking far," Will said, mouthing the words into the dip of Hannibal's collarbone. " *Portugal,* Hannibal, what the hell is in Portugal?"

"Architecture," Hannibal said. He laid Will out amongst the pillows, mouthing his way down Will's chest.

“There’s architecture in Balti- oh *fuck* .”

Hannibal paused in his gentle kisses to Will’s thighs, grinning.

“That’s not keeping me quiet,” Will hissed. Hannibal placed one more kiss obscenely close to Will’s cock.

“My apologies. You were too lovely to resist.”

Will’s next words were lost to Hannibal’s mouth as Hannibal surged forward, hauling Will’s legs up around his hips and nearly folding him in half. Will kissed back with a grin, hands cupping Hannibal’s face as they rutted together a while. When he pulled back to slick his fingers with spit, Will turned his head to the side and looked out over nighttime Paris.

They’d stayed here during the war; had met by absolute accident.

Will had been coming through with the English soldiers, Hannibal had been living in Montmartre.

As Hannibal’s cock nudged between Will’s legs, seeking entrance, a cool hand folded over Will’s lips and Hannibal kissed the backs of his own fingers.

“I’d not been to Portugal before,” he murmured, filling Will up in slow, deliberate thrusts that had Will’s eyes rolling closed and his body shuddering in pleasure beneath him. One hand fisted the sheets, the other clung to Hannibal’s shoulders. “And I felt I had the time to pay it a visit.”

Will made a sound against his hand and Hannibal could feel his lips stretching in a smile. With a harsher shove, he pushed in to the hilt and held himself balanced over Will for a moment.

“You are radiant,” he whispered. Will opened his eyes to watch him.

For many years, perhaps even a century, their lovemaking had not been gentle. It had been hungry, or wrathful, or cruel. Both enjoyed it, both sought the other for that hit, that pleasure only they could provide. It had taken a long time for their intimacies to grow softer.

Hannibal made love to Will now and continued to whisper against him, telling Will of the beaches and the moonlight over them, the houses he had enjoyed sketching, the people he had looked in on through restaurant windows as he walked the nighttime streets. He made love to Will as the other moaned muffled against his hand and opened up his body for Hannibal’s perusal.

Hannibal ducked his head to suck on a nipple until Will was whining, the sound helpless and high against his palm. He bit the other, just enough to draw blood, and Will came, hard, between the two of them, clenching his body like a vice around Hannibal as he did.

Will’s moans always pitched a little higher when he came, when every thrust threatened to be the one that tore him to pieces. Hannibal surged against him, relishing those sounds as he spilled wet and hot into Will’s welcoming body.

After, he draped himself across Will's chest, nuzzling his throat. "Portugal's beauty was dulled without you," he said.

Will hummed. He brought a hand up to cradle Hannibal's skull, twisting long fingers through blond locks. "You'd like Baltimore," he said.

"You don't live in Baltimore."

"Close enough. An hour, maybe, if things are slow. You'd like the stars in Wolf Trap and the opera in the cities."

" *You* would like the opera in Florence. Performed as it should be."

Will raised an eyebrow. "And where would I put the dogs? I can't board them indefinitely."

Hannibal sighed, resigned. "A vacation to Florence," he suggested. "After you've introduced me to your dogs. How many, this time?"

"Seven," Will told him, grinning when Hannibal groaned. He'd always liked animals, but never in the sheer volume that Will preferred to keep them. Hannibal enjoyed horseback riding, he enjoyed the occasional feline companion, he enjoyed Will's dogs, when he visited. He was unsure he could live with seven.

"You'll remember one of them," Will added after a moment, stretching with a pleased groan beneath Hannibal's weight and drawing up a knee at his side. "Maggie's still around. She's going on twelve now."

"Do you think she'll remember me?"

"The man with the endless supply of delicious treats?" Will smiled. "No, don't think so."

"I'll have to endear myself to her again, then," Hannibal replied. They lay together a few moments more, comfortable in the quiet of their room, their space, their home. Before Will turned his wrist to check the time and hummed.

"It's going on midnight, we should start thinking about dinner."

"Do you have a preference?"

"O negative," Will deadpanned, and Hannibal reached up to gently flick his finger against Will's nose. "You know I'm not the connoisseur you are, Hannibal. Young, inebriated, drunk, and male."

"Paris has a thriving underground music scene," Hannibal suggested. Will tilted his head in consideration.

"So it does."

Will had been bitten young. Not so young as to be carded, most of the time, but young enough that he could easily slip himself into another persona entirely, and most were none-

the-wiser. He wore his jeans a little tighter, his shirt with the top button undone. He let Hannibal style his hair, and that alone nearly sent them toppling back into the bed for the remainder of the evening.

Will's stomach won out, in the end. They found a club that was dark, and loud. Hannibal played the role of a doting older lover well. He held Will's hips when they danced and whispered choices into his ear.

The man they chose was tall, lean, and rude. He was on Will immediately, when Hannibal backed off under the pretense of 'using the restroom.'

This was how the game worked.

"I can show you a good time, baby," he whispered, his hands on Will's ass, his vodka breath against his cheek. Will let his eyelashes flutter, his smile small, knowing.

"Fuck me?" He pleaded. "Take me out back, show me what you've got."

He'd grabbed Will's hand and shoved it between his legs, laughing obscenely at the face Will made - mistaking his bored displeasure for innocent incomprehension.

"This is what I got, sweetheart, you ever had one that big before?"

Will shook his head, bit his lip, let his eyes travel to where Hannibal had sequestered himself in the shadows, watching and waiting for Will to take their meal to go. Will did, just moments later, one hand still between the guy's legs, the other wrapped around his shoulder as he whispered some filthy promise to him and pulled away.

The man followed. They always did.

It was impossible to resist Will Graham when he turned up the charm. From what Hannibal knew, Will had never had to enthrall anyone in his entire immortal life.

He allowed Will his play, leaving the club moments later and taking slow, measured steps to the alley around the corner. It reeked with overflowing bins, steam frothed up from a pipe just above their heads. It looked like a film set, like something unreal.

That was the plan, really. Staging was everything; hunting was an art.

Hannibal moved like a phantom, silent and quick, and watched as the brute from the club tore at Will's clothes and sucked bruises into his skin, all the while promising Will that he would get the *fuck of his life* and *never think of that old bastard with his limp dick ever again.*

"That's appallingly rude," Hannibal informed him. The man had enough time to turn towards him-- looking disgustingly prideful rather than repentant-- before Will sank sharp teeth into his jugular vein.

The man choked, startled, winded. Hannibal crowded his back, lowering his mouth to the other side of his neck. "You should have behaved better," he murmured.

Once bitten, there was little someone could do to fight one of them off, let alone the two of them together. It stole people's breath, their words. The bite burned beyond description, and the feeding weakened them rapidly.

By the time Hannibal and Will had drunk their fill, the man hadn't even managed a scream.

"God, they always taste so much better when they're wasted," Will said, wiping a droplet of blood from his chin. His lips were still stained red. Hannibal wanted to have him all over again, right here, above the remains of their dinner.

"He was well-seasoned," Hannibal agreed.

Will looked at him with a raised eyebrow. "Lot of drunks in Baltimore," he said.

Hannibal kissed him, helpless.

Hannibal took his time moving things into the country. Will had his own safehouses, had places he adored where he kept residences, but he never moved things out of them. Hannibal, on the other hand, was a packrat. He moved as many things with him as possible, any time he moved locations.

It amused Will to no end, watching him try to make space for his library among Will's books in the solitary little farmhouse in Wolf Trap.

The first time he'd come, laden only with a weekend bag and promising a trunk was on its way the next day with his things, Maggie had recognized him. She was quite old for her size, now, limping from arthritis and almost entirely blind, but she waddled over to Hannibal and nosed against his shins until he knelt to stroke behind her ears.

There was very little Will loved to see more than Hannibal interacting with his pack of dogs.

It took three months for Hannibal to get the house looking like he wanted it to, and two months for Will to fight him on it before they could be considered settled.

Will taught. Hannibal sought out the arts. They made love on silk sheets and fucked like animals everywhere else. Will's students asked him if he'd met a woman.

"She has you wrapped around her paw," Will said disapprovingly, peeking out the front door.

Hannibal was seated in his rocking chair on the porch, Maggie draped happily over his lap and occasionally slurping bits of meat from Hannibal's hands.

Though it did nothing for them nutritionally, they *could* eat human food, should they choose. Hannibal liked to indulge; he'd taken up cooking out of boredom in the early 20th century, and had been unstoppable ever since. Still, he preferred to taste a dish and then serve it to guests rather than let most of it go to waste. Will was under no illusions as to why there was an entire meat and cheese platter on their porch.

“She’s lived a long life,” Hannibal said, slipping Maggie another piece of cured beef. “She deserves a few treats.”

“They’re *bad* for her,” Will insisted. He settled into his seat beside Hannibal, frowning at the platter. His body didn’t process food. No matter what Hannibal said, he’d never considered the flavor worth the need to void his stomach later.

“She’s been good for long enough to be allowed to be bad once in a while,” Hannibal countered, amused. Will couldn’t argue that. He reached out to scratch behind Maggie’s ears as her tail beat lazily against the arms of the chair and she licked her lips.

“Hi sweet girl,” he told her, cupping her muzzle and gently shaking it before letting her go. He leaned his head against Hannibal’s shoulder and said nothing more on the matter of him feeding his dog human food. He could smell as well as Hannibal could how close she was to passing on.

It never got any easier.

Perhaps that was why Will surrounded himself with so many.

After a while, Maggie yawned and tucked her nose against Hannibal’s elbow and dozed, her large mutt body draped over his thighs, tail dangling to the porch and just barely brushing the wood. Will turned his face and kissed Hannibal’s cheek.

“There’s a very promising student in the class this year,” Will told him quietly. Hannibal hummed, to show he was listening, but didn’t interrupt. “Definitely won’t kill the dogs while we’re away.”

“You’d trust someone so young with your pack?”

“They’re all young,” Will pointed out, amused, and caught Hannibal’s eye. “And she’s clever. Wants to go into field work. The dogs will certainly keep her on her toes.”

“If you think so.”

“I do.”

Hannibal let his eyes study Will a moment more before ducking his head to look at Maggie again. “Then perhaps we can plan something for the winter. Avoid the tourists.” He stroked her soft ears and watched the sweet animal shift a little in her sleep before settling again. It was a few months yet til winter.

Will watched her too, reached out to rest his hand over Hannibal’s against her fur, and nosed beneath his jaw with a sigh.

“I hear Florence is lovely in the snow.”

End Notes

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